

THE railway car was full of uninteresting people; doubtless all of them had souls moulded by the tragedies of human life; their faces were marred by suffering; but in travelling one likes to be diverted by watching agreeable countenances, and imagining *their* histories. The entrance of two ladies relieved the monotony; when they were fairly settled and the train was again in motion, some of the passengers studied them attentively. One was a widow, it was evident by the frill of her cap, by the length of the veil; by the looseness of the wedding-ring on the thin finger; those fingers had learned to take care of themselves. Her hair, brushed smoothly under the cap, had an auburn tinge, her mouth was one you liked to watch; when she spoke, the lips shaped themselves prettily and curved expressively. They admired the folding of the veil over the bonnet, the neatness of her gloves, even the manner in which her shawl was pinned; one judges character by trifles. She had with her a crimson-lined travelling-bag, not crowded, but full of dainty luxuries; when the clasp was unfastened, were visible a silver-topped cologne-bottle, a bronze morocco dressing-case. One would gladly have known that woman as a friend.

Her companion on the opposite seat was young; her face showed a fair and tranquil past. She looked happy and ready to be pleased; her eyes were thoughtful, her cheeks glowed with the excitement and vigor of youth. She seemed to have travelled little, and was attentive to all that passed, within and without. Her eyes had a peculiarly open look, caused by the unusual width between the lids. She was standing on the threshold, waiting with eager interest the events of her womanhood. All her appointments were handsome, from her silk umbrella to the soft Scotch shawl by her side. We involuntarily hoped that these two travellers had through tickets like ourselves.

The young lady looked often out of the window, and seemed a little restless; she did not compose herself with the air of one who anticipates a long journey, and far too soon, the train slackening at a small station, she deliberately gathered up all her property, and, bending forward to say a few hurried words to the other lady, imprinted on her lips a quiet kiss. In a few moments we saw her on the platform, pointing out rather timidly her trunks; we

caught a glimpse of a private carriage, evidently waiting for her, and then returned to our dull ride. Why *did* she stop at that small place?

The lady watched every movement until the cars were fast separating them from her, when she drew down her veil, and under its shelter a treacherous handkerchief betrayed her tears.

A blue violet transformed into a velvet-petalled pansy, such was Virginia Ravenel in the estimation of her governess. Mrs. Cameron, finding the young girl five years before in the indiscriminate training of a boarding-school, had discovered the pearl in the oyster-shell, and set herself to its polishing. The Scotchwoman was a governess in a large school, and Virginia had been her dearest pupil. An undeveloped, motherless girl could not have found a truer guide and friend. But in the beauty of a statue, the sculptor is forgotten; symmetry does not suggest the long-used chisel.

Virginia Ravenel stood on the platform looking wistfully after the retreating train. With it her old life seemed to have rushed away; now she must meet the new. The coachman opened the carriage door. Only a mile away lived the dreaded strangers to whose care she was consigned; her large trunks were placed on a baggage-wagon to follow her; there was no excuse for delay; Virginia was borne rapidly away to the residence of her guardian's mother.

By direction of her guardian, absent in Europe, the young girl, on leaving school, was ordered to accept his mother's hospitality until her future course could be determined. Virginia was nineteen, and not a common school-girl, therefore she rebelled with her whole heart at this disposition of herself.

The carriage stopped before an old house withdrawn from the village street by a lawn; she saw a row of pillars upholding the roof of the portico, and in the doorway an old lady waiting to welcome her. This was Virginia's first impression of her hostess. At a glimpse she saw the silvery hair which sheds a pleasant radiance over the face, like moonlight; the soft lace about the throat, in which the head seems to nestle lovingly, like a dove's in its snowy plumage. Of course she wore a black silk dress and a small black shawl over her shoulders; such a costume belongs to a woman of her age as much as white to a bride. Virginia met, moreover, a charitable eye and a mouth

caress. After this welcome, Virginia soon felt quite at home in her large, comfortable room. At the tea-table were three ladies—the mother, the young girl in the freshness and beauty of her youth, heightened by a tasteful dress, and the guardian's sister, of whom Virginia could make nothing less than an old maid, her *particular* aversion. The tea-table was faultless in its arrangements, and Virginia, used to the plebeian cups and plates of a boarding-school, enjoyed fully the delicate china and bright silver on the tray. By the delicious light of a wood-fire the furniture of the room was revealed. Virginia, from her sofa, admired especially a stand of green-house plants set in the deep window between the lace curtains; a cluster of rose-colored geraniums she resolved to paint forthwith. Then her eye was arrested by a Gothic bookcase, dark as ebony, filled with books in luxurious bindings, but evidently much used. Some one lived here fond of books and flowers. Was it the mother or her daughter? An admirable bust of Shakspeare, over which the firelight flickered, stood on a carved pedestal, and a graceful group of statuary adorned the mantel. Who had so much taste? Virginia had not decided when she fell asleep. When morning came, she took a deliberate ante-breakfast survey of the house and grounds, and was more puzzled than ever.

Virginia, reared in a city boarding-school, had seen few flowers; occasionally she went to a green-house with her governess for a bouquet; of country flowers she had no conception. She saw them everywhere; the garden was full of June roses and early annuals, arranged with prodigal munificence. Within, every room was flower-perfumed. In the dim, still drawing-room, into which she peeped, were pure Parian vases filled with lilies of the valley. In one vase were two of the rich green leaves and a multitude of slender stalks covered with fragrant bells. The large lower hall was adorned with roses; vases of varied patterns and styles contained them, ranging from the darkest crimson to the most spotless white. In the centre was a pyramid of roses, their shades artfully blended; in a slender ground-glass vase was a single moss-rosebud; before one picture a cluster of blush-roses, before another a cream-colored spray; the hall was, in fact, a gallery of pictures, and each one seemed a shrine for its favorite rose. One portrait was especially honored; around it hung a wreath of dainty rosebuds, graduated from purplish crimson at the

exquisite vase on the floor beneath, a lavish group of choice tea-roses made the whole place fragrant.

Who had stolen the early dew still lingering on the flowers, and arranged the floral offering? In the breakfast-room the mystery was solved; for, sitting stern and silent behind the coffee-urn, was the maiden sister, whose dress gave evidence of dew and garden-work. The old lady sat peaceful and passive in her usual chair. You would not have supposed that the stiff red fingers pouring the coffee could have been playing with roses and filling flower-baskets in the early dawn. There were flowers in the breakfast-room, trailing morning-glories filled a spreading vase on the table, the inimitable blue down not yet dimmed; one vine was trained by the window, and its blue eyes looked in cheerily.

Virginia was in ecstasies. Before breakfast was ended she determined that in her own house she would have exclusive lilies in the drawing-room, popular roses to greet one in the hall, and bright, emblematic morning-glories to make coffee relish better. Alas! it is not always June.

Miss Rachel allowed the enthusiastic young girl to follow her, after breakfast, while she finished the decoration of a few rooms.

"What is your favorite flower?" she asked, abruptly, as if it was a settled thing in every one's mind.

"My favorite?" said Virginia. "Why, I like them all."

"Nonsense, child, you ought to love one best; we all do; mother does, Paul does, every one of sense should."

They were passing through the hall. "Who is that?" inquired Virginia, looking at the flower-wreathed portrait.

"Why, that is Paul, my brother," said Miss Rachel, rather indignantly. "Who else could it be?"

Virginia meekly answered that she had never seen her guardian, and ran into the garden. Miss Rachel gathered honeysuckles for her mother's room, and with magic skill adapted them to a hanging basket for her window. "Mother loves these best; she likes honey at the heart, she says." Virginia ran about, gay as a humming-bird, unable to decide what her flower should be, until the dew was dried, and then she had merely time to tie a few geranium leaves with mignonette for herself.

Miss Rachel, divested of garden gloves and

in perfect order; the first was devoted to miscellaneous articles, and might quite fairly be called an index to Virginia's character and pursuits: in the upper tray was nicely folded a cloth riding-habit, with whip and gauntlets by the side. Miss Rachel hung it in the wardrobe, with hints about the dangers of riding. The second tray held one of those inviting Turkish writing-cases, fitted up with stores of cream-laid paper, bright pens, vermilion wax, and many little conveniences, all showing that its owner held the pen of a ready writer; Miss Rachel approved and placed it on a little table. Next appeared a caba of equal beauty and durability, and its polished thimble, spools of Coates' best, and sharp scissors, equal to cutting silk, attested that Virginia, before Hawthorne made it fashionable, had learned to sew with womanly dexterity. Then came a paint-box, each cake wrapped in cotton-wool, the sable brushes in nice order, the palette perfectly clean; Miss Rachel looked less pleased, and laid them in a drawer difficult to open. With equal favor she regarded a sketch-book and pile of drawing-paper with which the provident artist had supplied herself. From the depths of the trunk arose a jaunty riding-hat and stout walking-boots, suitable for country roads, a garden-hat and gloves, and a pile of music, whose melody lingered in the ends of Virginia's fingers; this was carried to the music-room below, while the pretty garden-hat rejuvenated the antlers in the hall. A few books, loved and prized, some stores of paper, ink, and sewing materials not procurable in country shops removed, and the trunk was ready to fill a niche in the well regulated garret. Before the day was over, the house grew very familiar with all Virginia's possessions, to say nothing of her light step and ringing laugh.

At the end of the upper hall a large organ attracted the visitor; she longed to touch the keys in the twilight, and, trying it, was discovered by Miss Rachel, who said, sharply:—

"No one touches that but Paul: I keep it locked."

"Does he play?" Virginia asked, superfluously.

"Yes, he does everything, and like no one else."

Of course, long before, Virginia had found out who was Miss Rachel's idol, and in a few days she regarded this unknown Paul as a grand centre around which his mother, sister, the flowers, books, and music revolved as satel-

grand organ unused and the imprisoned books debarred from her touch. Many privileges just within her reach were withheld by Miss Rachel's edict. Through all the pleasant midsummer days, the pet horse stamped in vain in the stable; without Paul's permission, he should not be used; the riding-habit hung idle on its peg. Virginia found herself ere long in the situation of poor Tantalus, to so many things were attached the "touch not, handle not;" even the flowers were jealously guarded.

Virginia learned to supply her own room with flowers from the fields and woods; for them she was indebted to no one. She would not touch one of Paul's flowers; these were far prettier, she tried to think. Shut out from the library and garden, Virginia lived a nomadic life in the neighboring groves and pastures, singing, talking to herself, botanizing, sketching, and sometimes sleeping on the fragrant turf. There came dull days of pitiless rain, when Virginia sought refuge in the old lady's homelike room, and mended all her clothes, hearing, meanwhile, a biography of Paul which would have filled many volumes.

In her secret heart sprang up many doubts about this traveller's goodness; and, when his mother ended her narration with the hope that he would soon return, how ardently she wished that he would be detained at least through the winter! Nevertheless, she did often stop before the portrait in the hall, fascinated by the eyes which she protested were the most disagreeable she had ever seen, and found herself wondering how old he really was, and when he would come home.

Flushed with delight, Virginia entered the parlor one evening, her hands full of water-lilies, which she declared were best loved by her of all the flowers that grew. Miss Rachel started and took off her glasses. "No, you cannot have them for your flowers. I did not know they were open yet. It is Paul's flower. How did you get them? in his little boat?" Virginia was ready to cry with vexation; they would not let her go off on a distant lake for her flowers without claiming them for that hateful Paul. If in Europe he contrived to spoil all her pleasure at home, what would he do when he returned? She threw down the flowers, and ran to her room; Miss Rachel coolly took them, and placed them, in an antique pitcher with exquisite grace, before her brother's picture. When Virginia was summoned to tea, she had the pleasure of seeing them



by playing all the evening in the distant music-room, instead of reading the papers to the ladies, which they liked extremely, as she always picked out the most entertaining bits, and read them with rare distinctness and expression.

One thing puzzled Virginia more than she would have cared to own. She heard daily of Paul's accomplishments, of his taste, of his genius, his kindness, his wisdom; but never a word escaped his mother or sister of his loving or being loved. Over this mystery she frequently pondered, until by degrees Paul became to her a hero whose life had been embittered by a terrible disappointment.

Mrs. Stuart, a married sister, was spending the summer in her country house, with her little children. Virginia was at first quite charmed by her pretty face and pleasing manners; they drove and walked together, the young lady became the patron saint of the nursery, they "got on" nicely until the distant Paul became the bane of their conversation. Virginia was doomed to hear his praises sung by a different tongue in another key. While his mother dwelt on his disposition and moral perfections, and Miss Rachel constantly reminded you of his culture and intellectual abilities, the other sister spoke of him as an Apollo of grace and beauty. On such wise as this she soon became a thorn in Virginia's side: "How odd that your name happened to be Virginia!" she would say. "But you must not get up any romance about it. All the girls around here have been dying to captivate Paul for years; but none of them are good enough for him."

How the crimson rushed to the young girl's face! how she did long to humble this fastidious Paul, and make his heart ache!

Miss Rachel and her mother were spending the day with a friend, a rare occurrence, and Virginia was alone; she heard a rattling of keys, and, looking into the hall, saw Mrs. Stuart sitting one in a door never opened. "Would you like to see Paul's room?" she called out. "Rachel is away, and I want to see if he has anything new."

Virginia had her share of curiosity, although she pretended that, especially in regard to that room, not a particle dwelt in her, so, rather reluctantly, she followed Mrs. Stuart into the elegant apartment. "How selfish he is," she thought, "to appropriate this nice room and furniture, and then keep it locked up!" Mrs. Stuart could not induce her to acknowledge the

they went into the library, and then Virginia's indignation knew no bounds, that this beautiful room was deemed unworthy for other than the scholarly presence of Paul. She was forced to admire the ingenious writing-table designed by himself, the well chosen books, the narrow stained windows, the few good pictures. Why should it always be darkened and empty, when she was fully able to appreciate the harmony and taste everywhere visible? His mother preferred her knitting and quiet gossip, his sister cared for housekeeping and order; she was the very one to creep into one of the easy-chairs and grow familiar with books of which she already knew something. But Mrs. Stuart, not allowing her to take down a volume, turned towards the door, and locked all the treasures within, out of her reach, informing her that the drawers were filled with curiosities and valuable engravings. Passing by the portrait ever looking at her from its niche, Virginia called it inwardly a very Nero, who delighted to watch the death of all innocent pleasures. She was destined to experience another trial. From the hall window she saw the saddle-horse led out for exercise, and thought of the pretty habit in the wardrobe, the hat never taken from its box. Still Virginia could not be unhappy; she threw herself on her own resources, and was the sunlight of the house, even in the eyes of her guardian's mother and sister. These annoyances shadowed her path at intervals. With her outdoor life she was perfectly content, and lavished her warmest love on birds and wild flowers.

Now the trees threw away their red and yellow leaves, and the days grew very short. Miss Rachel was reading a letter which made her cheeks redden like Virginia's, fresh from a frolic in the wind. The same news gave unutterable joy to two of the party, ill-concealed discomfort to the third, for Paul, that dear, that dreaded being, was coming home. What made Virginia pause before her mirror longer than usual that night, querying how she would strike a stranger? What made her hasten with her autumn sewing and try on her last winter's dresses to see which was most becoming? Miss Rachel commenced a vigorous putting of the house in order, and Virginia thought more of herself, less of her woods and outdoor amusements.

The day was lovely, with a fascinating haziness in the atmosphere inducing a subtle languor, a dreamy mood; Virginia yielded to it, and, arrayed in a half-worn dress and gipsy



At last she spied a seat high up in the branches of a huge tree, accessible by a ladder which she coaxed the gardener to bring. This she reached with scratched hands and torn dress, and soon in her brown seat became engrossed with a story-book found in the drawing-room and a pocketful of apples gathered on the way. We all know the pleasures of fruit and a good story; imagine them in a tree on a warm, entrancing day. When Virginia at length looked up, she saw, carved on a branch at her side, the name of Paul. Vexed at this discovery, she uttered a contemptuous exclamation; and, drawing from her pocket a dull penknife, began to inscribe underneath, in larger characters, the word *Virginia*, as if to assert her superior right to the tree. Most intent was she on her occupation; she had reached the last *i*, and had broken off the point of the blade in making the dot, when she heard some one ascending her ladder, and, looking up, with perfect consternation, beheld at the topmost round the familiar, yet strange, the ugly, yet undeniably handsome face of the veritable Paul! Nor was her confusion lessened when she felt that his eyes were resting on the freshly-cut letters in his own favorite branch and tree. "Allow me to make the *a*," he said, gravely; "I have a better knife." So she sat with a deeper color than ever flushed her face before, while he, with a few sharp strokes, completed the pretentious Virginia.

The descent by a ladder from a tree is by no means a graceful proceeding. Virginia felt very unlike a heroine, very unlike the dignified ward advancing to meet her guardian, which scene she had often depicted in her fancy, when she gave him her cold scratched hand that he might help her down. Rushing into the hall precipitately, to gain her room as soon as possible, she encountered Miss Rachel, dressed in a grand silk and new headdress, with beautiful lace about her neck and wrists. Virginia was filled with fresh confusion, in her shabby calico and forlorn hat. Turning around to apologize humbly, she saw her guardian's amused look, and darted, without a word, up the staircase. Of what use would it be now to array herself in the crimson frock? Nevertheless, when the tea-bell rang, Virginia was quite presentable; nothing but the rich color reminded one of the tree-nymph; and very demurely she went through the introduction: "Miss Ravenel—my brother, Mr. McAlpine."

In the evening Paul sat close by his mother's

many questions, and made many comments; Virginia heard everything in silence, and was apparently overlooked as she quietly bent over her sewing near the shaded lamp. Occasionally she thought how miserable it is to stay in a family where you have no claim! or how much he talks of himself! Once in a while she was really diverted, and laughed with the rest. Of every other object in the room the traveller seemed very mindful; he examined the plants on the flower-stand, and played all the evening with a geranium-leaf; he spoke of the minutest changes in the room, and smiled at the locked bookcase. "My books will be glad to see me, I think; no one else seems to care for them." Virginia involuntarily looked up, appropriating this accusation, and gave her guardian one of the glances she had frequently bestowed on the portrait in his absence. Then followed personal inquiries about friends; there were many bits of news to tell. Virginia was not interested; she folded her work, placed her thimble in its ivory box, the scissors in their sheath.

Her guardian said, in a half-questioning, half-commanding tone: "You will stay; I was about to read a Psalm."

He rose as he spoke, placed a Psalter on a carved reading-stand, and read in a melodious way a few verses; they seemed few, because the tone was musical and the meaning well rendered.

When Virginia heard the door of the long-closed room unlocked, a very small hour of the night had struck, yet all that time she had been thinking of the returned traveller, and if she ever could like him. By each plate at the breakfast-table was a tiny bouquet, fresh from the conservatory; and in passing through the hall Virginia had seen two horses, saddled, at the door; her heart beat quicker when she noticed that one was prepared for a lady.

"You are not afraid of a cold ride, I trust, Miss Ravenel?" asked the horses' owner. And Virginia's eyes danced with joy, in spite of Miss Rachel's remonstrances about the frosty morning and gay steed. Quickly equipped in the pretty riding-habit and jaunty hat, Virginia fearlessly jumped on the saddle, and took her first ride on the coveted horse. The exhilaration of the ride did not leave her during the day; even when she heard them unpacking Paul's boxes in the mother's room, she was quite satisfied to be amusing herself. Very soon she was called to see the pretty souvenirs, and was allowed, at Paul's suggestion, to take

held in her lap a pile of glossy satin, which she stroked fondly, and begged Virginia to admire, telling her that she should save it to wear at Paul's wedding. Virginia wondered if the bride was already chosen. She glanced a little curiously at her guardian, and met a roguish smile, too indefinite to be interpreted. Amongst the beautiful and costly gems of art that strewed the floor, Virginia perhaps paused to examine most frequently a pair of mosaic bracelets, set elaborately in Etruscan gold, and representing many scenes in Italy—in fact, being a miniature picture-gallery of Rome. However, she only stopped to look at them when her guardian was busy elsewhere; for worlds she would not have seemed to envy one trifle brought over the water. Miss Rachel employed her in dusting knickknacks and filling baskets with refuse paper and straw; she had long ago found out that Virginia could be trusted. Paul had evidently planned the disposition of all the *bijoux*, and after dinner hung the new pictures, while Virginia was permitted to hold the brass knobs, and make suggestions about the light. Several times her choice governed the arrangement, although Paul had the air of a connoisseur. Before sunset, this avalanche of pretty things had melted away into the house; only one trunk of less valued relics remained to be stored away.

Miss Rachel carried many presents to her own room; the library was a little crowded; Mrs. McAlpine rejoiced over her laces and shawls; the servants exulted in their remembrances; Virginia saw the gardener working in a new Scotch cap; she stood by the window looking at the dry leaves, and pretended she was very glad to be forgotten. The door of the library was now wide open; nothing would tempt her to enter; she heard the rustling of a newspaper, and caught a glimpse of a bright fire in the grate. Paul was again at home in his old places. Through the dining-room door she saw Miss Rachel, with keys in her hand, taking out sweetmeats for tea, busy and pleased. She seemed out of place as she walked up and down the long hall, wondering what she was made for, and if she should ever have a home to make happy. Music was always her resource in the twilight; she had played an hour old snatches of songs, sad airs full of pathos, and then tinkling melodies like the dripping of a brook through the ravine; she suited her varied moods as thoughts rose and died within her; she played idly, and yet revealed her character.

drawing-room; it preceded her through the hall. She felt that kind of indignation that takes possession of one when a stranger is found peeping into a letter or listening at the door.

Paul had letters to write; why need he bring his portfolio into the parlor, and usurp the table while she, having no reasonable excuse to offer, was obliged to read aloud the evening papers, being assured that nothing disturbed the penman? Of course she imagined that he heard every word; what she read sounded silly or dull; in rather an unamiable mood she entered her room, and going to the dressing-table to brush out her long hair found thereon a morocco casket containing on its satin lining those beautiful bracelets, in memory of the land where her father had died.

Virginia pushed them away contemptuously, then sat down and cried; she did not like presents given from duty, it was not necessary to include her in his charities, and these bracelets she certainly liked least; if he must give anything, why should he select these ornaments? The difficulty of thanking the giver then occupied all her thoughts; should she write a note, or stammer forth her gratitude? At all events, she would wait until she saw him alone; she would never wear them, on that she was resolved; jewels were worthless unless given by one you loved. In Paul's presence, Virginia seemed shy and silent, perhaps his perfect breeding and self-possession made her so; she certainly was apt to say the wrong thing, and blushed miserably at her frequent mistakes. Day by day her ignorance appeared to her more palpable; she asked ridiculous questions, and was snapped up by Miss Rachel when she did attempt to talk. If she could only bring herself to enter the library, and ask permission to borrow books, how hard she would study to find out something of the subjects about which they talked; for Miss Rachel was clever and understood her brother readily.

Winter settled down on the house; within it was warm and bright. What wonders this new member of the household wrought! Every room seemed to recognize his presence, it pervaded and bettered the entire household. This strong, manly son and brother, how he helped on the snowy, dull days!

Soon after his return, Mr. McAlpine became very busy, and continued so, finding time, however, to bestow on the household a thousand little attentions. With the greatest deference

forgotten that she was growing old and plain when he was devoting himself to her. Virginia had quick powers of perception; she observed carefully, and her knowledge often made her sad. Mr. McAlpine treated his ward with perfect politeness, nay, even with a gallantry habitual to him; but Virginia confessed that they did not understand each other, and withdrew into herself.

In the depth of winter the house was decorated for a party; the handsome rooms gave the impression of summer, owing to their warmth and flower fragrance. Mrs. McAlpine wore her thickest silk, her softest illusion lace, and looked very stately by the drawing-room fire. Miss Rachel rustled in a steel-gray silk, with a lace barbe on her hair, and made an admirable hostess. Virginia came down last; the three were already stationed in their places, and she completed the group. They reminded you of the seasons as they stood there: the mother in her beautiful age, the sister in her autumnal gravity, the brother in his full manhood, the young girl in the loveliness of her springtime. She was dressed in white; the texture fell in soft, creamy folds; she had camellias in her hair sent for from a neighboring town, not begged from Paul's conservatory. On her bare arms glittered the bracelets set in Etruscan gold. Mrs. McAlpine noticed the *crêpe* dress, Miss Rachel the bought flowers, while Paul saw most distinctly the jewel-clasped arms.

In the course of the evening, Virginia found herself drawn by the surging of the crowd into the library; the air was fresher there. Almost before she was aware, she was facing one of the bookcases reading the titles of the unknown volumes.

"Have you read them all?" asked a familiar voice. Virginia turned, and saw her guardian evidently in earnest. "You shun my library," he said; "are you afraid of knowledge or of me? We are not dangerous." He gave her one of his most fascinating smiles and passed on.

The party over, Virginia was sleepless. Yes, she was afraid; he was dangerous, and hearing the fast beating of her heart, feeling the agony which the thought of the separation caused, she resolved to leave the old house, the pictures, the library, the flowers, the mother, Miss Rachel, her guardian; to leave them all, and in a new life forget the old. It was the only thing to do. In the morning Virginia knocked at the library door, and asked her guardian abruptly, "if she might go away."

ron," she said.

"Are you not happy here? do we not take good care of you?" He looked at her with a most penetrating glance.

"Yes," she said, with drooping eyes. "but I *prefer* to go away."

"Your father asked me as a dying favor to take care of you," he said; "I hoped to keep you here. Am I so disagreeable that you cannot stay?"

"Yes," she answered as before, "I would rather go away." Raising her eyes she saw him calm as ever, writing carelessly on a strip of paper before him.

"Then it is your deliberate choice," he urged; "you prefer Mrs. Cameron's guardianship to mine."

Women must sometimes conceal, with lightning speed, their true thoughts; Virginia completely deceived her guardian when she still said—

"She has been a good friend; I am safe with her; let me go at once."

A few days sufficed for the taking away from the house all reminders of youth and maidenhood. The stag's horns lost the garden hat, the little work-table missed the small gold thimble, the trunks were again packed, and Virginia went forth with only one new possession, an oppressive burden at the heart. Mrs. Cameron received her pupil in a little cottage, her home during the holidays. There they read and talked together, there Virginia grew outwardly happy, and never once did Mrs. Cameron look aright into the depths of her companion's eyes.

Miss Rachel found the bracelets tossed with some rubbish in a bureau drawer, and asked Paul if they did not belong to him. As he took them, Virginia had her wish, she did make his heart ache.

March came, dreary and desolate. There were three people in the world conscious of a want; it could only be supplied by spring.

A beggar stood in the rain before Mrs. Cameron's door; he asked admittance, and when it was granted, a great gift. Thus it happened that spring came earlier than usual that year, that the old house was again full of sunshine, that the old lady had her wedding-gown ready for Paul's wedding-day, that the bracelets found their way back to Virginia's arms.

Miss Rachel proved most unselfish, and resigned her brother willingly. Mrs. Stuart declared that she had always known how it would